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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the Colorado Children's Book Award (CCBA), established in 1975 to allow children, rather than adults, to vote on their favorite books. The rules for book nomination and voting are explained in this paper and a short history of the award is given. The remaining portion of the paper reviews briefly each of the 12 children's books from the 1981 CCBA nomination list, the subjects of which include problems young people encounter while growing up, animal adventures, childhood fears, and fantasy. (HTH)

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THE COLORADO CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD By Norma J. Livo

What Is the Colorado Children's Book Award (C.C.B.A.)?

Most children's books are written by adults, published by adults, reviewed by adults and bought by adults. There is one big problem with all of this however. That is, the favorite books of children have no connection in most cases, with the most highly adult-acclaimed books. In fact, if anything, there is a totally negative correlation in what children like and what adults label as award-winning literature.

With this knowledge, the Colorado Children's Book Award was established in 1975 to encourage children's active involvement with books and reading. Each spring the children of Colorado vote for their favorite book and nominate books for the following year's award.

Rules for Book Nomination

There are a few rules for C.C.B.A. book nominations. They are: books must be fiction; books must be published in the five years preceding the award year; the author of a nominated book must be a living American; and the books must be in print.

Rules for Voting

To vote children must have read or heard read to them a minimum of three books from the nomination list.

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A Little History on CCBA

The CCBA was established through the inspiration and leadership of Bill Curtis of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. The first award was presented in 1976 to Bill Peet for his "How Droofus the Dragon Lost His Head." In this first election, over 30,000 votes were cast by Colorado Children. Droofus was followed by "A Day No Pigs Would Die" by Robert Newton Peck in 1977, "Sweet Touch" by Lorna Balian in 1978, "The Great Green Turkey Creek Monster" by James Flora in 1979 and 1980's winner is yet to be announced.

1981 CCBA Nomination List

The nomination list for the 1981 CCBA has recently been issued. Ballots for this list of 12 books is due before April 15, 1981 in order to be counted. Voting results along with nominations for the 1982 award should be sent to: William Curtis, School of Education, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Austin Bluffs Parkway, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907. And now to the books themselves on the 1981 award list.

"Shelter From the Wind." By Marion D. Bauer. Seabury, $€.95.

What does a twelve-year-old girl on the Oklahoma prairie do when life is not treating her fairly? Stacy's mother has left her and her storeowner father, he has remarried and now her stepmother is expecting a baby. Stacy runs from her own problems and finds another human being with problems too. Old Ella lives all alone in the mesa area with her own memories of someone who left her also. The two of them

establish an understanding and Stacy discovers life isn't necessarily fair or easy. She returns home with a feeling of understanding and an acceptance for the way things are and might become.

There is a lot of dust-bowl philosophy and emotional conflict packed into this 108 page novel.

"Cross-Country Cat." By Mary Calhoun with illustrations by Erick Ingraham. Morrow, $6.67.

It all starts with Henry, a smart Siamese cat who was a hind-leg walker. While Henry and his people-family were on a weekend cross-country skiing trip up at the mountain cabin, The Kid made a pair of cross-country skis and poles for this talented hind-leg walking cat.

Henry does not much like skiing however. When Henry gets accidentally left behind at the cabin, he has to resort to really making the skiis work. Not only is this cat smart but he has rhythm. He has adventures on the trip out with an elk, rabbit, blue jay and coyote. When his people, who are returning find him, Henry is clever enough to make the absolute best of their rescue.

Mary Calhoun lives in Steamboat Springs with her husband Reverend Leon Wilkins. The artist spent some cross-country skiing time with Mary and Leon in order to get an accurate flavor for Henry and his adventures. The art work is outstanding, done in tones of blue and brown. The book was an Honor Book of the Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards of 1979. Mary will also be presented the Society of Children's Book Writers Golden Kite Award in the fall for her fiction work.

"Clown of God." By Tomie de Paola. Harcourt, $3.95.

In the tradition of a master storyteller, Tomie de Paola has retold an ancient legend, shaping it to his own life and experience. The story is of a juggler, Giovanni, made up in clown face, who after a life time of making people laugh and applaud becomes too old to practice

his art. At one point in his life two Brothers had told him, "If you give happiness to people, you give glory to God as well." His final performance is his greatest and is done as a gift for the Madonna and Child. Giovanni is found dead at the feet of the statue but the Child is smiling and holding the golden ball.

Combining the storyteller with the artist, de Paola has researched every detail of his paintings and created with pencil, ink and watercolor a book of great beauty.

"Me and the Man on the Moon Eyed Horse." By Sid Fleischman with illustrations by Eric von Schmidt. Little, $5.95.

Clint, his older sister Elvira and their Gramps live in Furnace Flats. Elvira and Gramps are the telegraph operators at the train station. Furnace Flats is the kind of place people race tumbleweeds on windy days for excitement.

Elvira not only is a telegraph operator but as the older sister (sixteen) she also is mothering her brother Clint. To make a 58 page story short, Clint rescues the circus train from destruction by the train robber Step-and-a-half Jackson. To do this Clint uses Elvira's brag red velvet curtains and some tumbleweeds. Due to Clint's ingenuity and fast action, the circus owner treats Furnace Flats to its first circus parade and show.

The language used in the story is unique. "Daybust was still a long way off." "He was faster with his dots and dashes than a woodpecker with a sore beak." "Only three citizens of Furnace Flats ever saw a circus parade, and the other two are liars." Along with the colorful language this book is just lots of fast fun.

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"Harry and the Terrible Whatzit. By Dick Gackenbach. Seabury, $6.95.

Harry would not go into the cellar because he knew a terrible Whatzit was down there. His mother refused to believe him and actually went down to the cellar to get a jar of pickles. When she didn't come back, Harry decided to rescue her. Sure enough, he found a double-headed three clawed, six toed, long-horned Whatzit. He confronted the Whatzit and noticed it shrank. The Whatzit explained the shrinking, "Because you aren't afraid of me anymore." Taking pity on the creature, Harry told it to try Sheldon Parker's cellar next door. Harry then found his mother outside cutting flowers. Harry got the feeling that maybe his mother believed him after all.

The red and brown expressive line drawings provide humor--especially the Whatzit.

The common childhood fear of cellars and dark damp places is faced head-on in this story. It would be a valuable story to read to a youngster from the safety of your loving lap. Followed up with conversation this book just might help some youngsters cope with some scary feelings.

"Ms Glee Is Waiting." By Donna Hill with illustrations by Diane Dawson. Atheneum, $7.95.

Laura is late for her piano lesson and encounters one transportation problem after another in her efforts to get to Ms Glee's. These land, sea and air approaches are certainly creative and extensive.

Anyone who has ever dragged their feet getting to a music lesson to stumble through last week's unpracticed exercises would appreciate Laura's plight.

The illustrations are worthy of study because they demonstrate where

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the next problem will be coming from as well as putting a definite time line on Laura's abortive attempts. Beside all of that the pictures are delightfully humorous.

"Bunnicula: A Rabbit Tale of Mystery." By Deborah and James Howe. Atheneum, $8.95.

So what would you do if you suspected the new family pet was a vampire? The Monroe family had found Bunnicula in a shoebox on a seat while attending a Dracula movie--thus Bunny-cula or Bunnicula.

Chester the cat and Harold the dog discovered Bunnicula out of his cage about the time the vegetables started turning white. In their investigations Chester manages to get in trouble when all he wants to do is protect his family.

A whimsical mystery written by the dog. After all, the dog even delivered the manuscript personally to the editor. Look out for dog authors who crave Twinkies.

"Frog and Toad All Year." By Arnold Lobel. Harper and Row, $6.89.

This picture book is an easy to read book about those two old friends, Frog and Toad. In this book there are five stories which go with each of the seasons plus a story for Christmas.

One of the stories is about Toad's first sled ride, another about how Frog found the corner spring is just around, a third is about ice cream cones in summer and another story is about a surprise Frog and Toad do for each other. The final story is about Christmas and the concern of the friends for each other.

All of the stories are really sensitive stories about friends and friendships. The illustrations in soft green and brown complement the mellow feelings of the book.

"A Summer To Die." By Lois Lowrey. Houghton Mifflin, $6.95.

Thirteen-year-old Meg and her beautiful 15 year-old sister Molly had just moved to the country with their parents. Meg's father has a year off from the university to write a book that, "Was going to change the whole history of literature" which was titled, "The Dialectic Synthesis of Irony."

Molly was accepted as a cheerleader in her new school. Meg found a new (70 years old) friend who shared her interest in photography. Meg's mother started to make a quilt using scraps of material from all the clothes her two daughters had worn. (This included Molly's first bra.)

And so it seemed the year would be a productive, pleasant one for all. Then sickness struck followed by death. New life came in the form of a baby born to their neighbors. The year was over, the book and quilt were completed and Meg had lived through the Ugly Duckling syndrome.

An exciting first book for children by an author who is a freelance journalist and photographer. Her personal interest in photography is woven expertly into the story. For example, Meg talks about how she feels when she controls the focus and the light and the composition and captures what she sees in a way that no one else is seeing it.

"A Secret Friend." By Marilyn Sachs. Doubleday, $6.95.

Jessica and her ex-friend Wendy were in the same class in school. Jessica cannot understand why Wendy is being so mean and is willing to do anything to have Wendy back as her best friend. The secret notes

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start appearing for Jessica signes A.S.F. (A Secret Friend?)

This book is about friendships, growing up and the hurting that is part of it all. Jessica does have a friend but it is the last possible person she would ever think of. She also learns a valuable lesson about what a friend really is.

"Welcome Home, Jellybean." By Marlene Shyer. Scribner, $7.95.

Twelve-year-old Neil Oxley's life is totally changed when his parents decide to bring their thirteen-year-old retarded daughter Gerri home from the institution. Neil is taken out of the private school because his mother has to quit her job to take care of Gerri.

Life gets shaken inside-out for the whole Oxley family and yet through the ugly, real events there is hope for the whole family to grow just as Gerri is herself growing.

The scenes at school of Neil's troubles are paralleled by his parent's problems. All of the worst possible events you could imagine seem to happen.

"Welcome Home, Jellybean" deals with the topic of retardation realistically, humorously and yet hopefully.

"Abel's Island." By William Steig. Farrar, $5.95.

Abel and his beloved mouse wife Amanda had just enjoyed a most pleasant and civilized picnic. Their picnic was complete right down to bright champagne and then the storm hit. They found refuge with other creatures in a rocky ledge.

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Amanda's scarf was swept away by the wind and Abel gallantly chased after it. Abel is torn away by the storm and ends up finally on an island.

Abel tries many ingenious escapes but finally accepts the fact he is a prisoner on the island. He makes a home in an empty log, gathers food, makes wine and discovers satisfaction as an artist. He sculpts from the island clay, statues of his beloved, family and friends. After a dangerous, hard winter spring arrives and shortly thereafter, a frog.

The frog, Gower Glackens has also been swept onto the island. After the spring runoff Gower leaves Abel and Abel is able to follow in his webbed feet prints when the river is much lower.

He returns home to his beloved Amanda the same loving Abel and yet a much stronger mouse.

This well crafted story has been compared to the classic, "Charlotte's Web" because of its strong, sensitive story. Abel is an outstanding mouse for sure.

Well, there they are. The 12 nominated books for the 1981 CCBA. I know which ones are my top three favorites. Dollars to donuts though, my picks won't be among the top three the Colorado young people vote as their award winner. I will let you know next spring the results and how well my selections fare.